

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
GOVERNOR SAMUEL H. ELROD
TO THE
NINTH LEGISLATIVE SESSION
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

COMPLIMENTS OF

SAMUEL H. ELROD,

GOVERNOR

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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TO THE

Ninth Legislative Session,

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA.

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Inaugural Address.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives

We are all justly proud of our state and our splendid citizenship. It is the hope of these moments, in the presence of these honored judges, in the presence of this true and tried citizen who now turns over to me the office he has so ably filled, and in the presence of you, the representatives of and from the people, to say something that will aid you in the performance of your duties and that will help you to assist me in the performance of mine.

It will be my constant aim to serve the people of the State faithfully and economically, and I ask your co-operation, your help and your abiding friendship.

The tendency of things under existing laws, is to escape taxation and, if something is not done, before we realize it, real estate and the homes of our people will be paying all the taxes. This is not right. If any class of property is to be exempt it should be the little home of the family. It is a notorious fact that no tax is paid on probably seventy-five per cent of our personal property. Moneys and credits are not listed. Assessors fail to find either.

Some scheme should be devised whereby an equitable part of all property should appear on the tax rolls. If this could be brought about it would swell the revenues very materially and it would reduce the rate of taxation. The money loaner will not willingly list his thousands, neither will the man that has \$50.00 on deposit in a bank drawing four per cent.

We have little faith that a costly tax-commission can bring about a reasonably satisfactory adjustment. However, if this legislature thinks otherwise, well and good. The State wants revenue and the people want equal assessment, just taxation, and less appropriation.

The personnel of this Legislature is the strongest that the people have yet elected. You can, if you will, largely improve the assessment and taxation laws. You will fail of your duty if you do not remedy some of the gross inequalities in our present tax laws. Let us put aside politics, schemes, and combines for large appropriations and let each and every one aid the wisest and clearest heads in bringing forth an improved tax code, one that will be fairer and more equitable to all our people, and one that will put upon the tax rolls much property that now escapes taxation. With care it can be drawn so as to cover "a large variety of natural and artificial persons who receive all the benefits of the State government but bear none of the burdens."

Candidly and seriously, the most important question before this Legislature is the problem of taxation, and if this Legislature does not do its duty, it will be the most important question for the next, and each succeeding Legislature, until it is rightfully settled. South Dakota is behind the times in handling the taxation problem. The time is ripe for a move forward.

The tolls charged by Telegraph and Telephone companies are too high and the service is not always the most satisfactory. They should pay a just and equitable tax.

The time has come when the rate of interest by contract should be lowered from twelve per cent. It is a shame that any citizen can be required to pay such a rate. It is not fair to the borrower, neither is it consistent with sound banking principles.

The constitution requires that a census shall be taken in the year 1905, and to the end that it may be done economically, consistent with efficiency, we recommend that the Secretary of the State Historical Society be made EX-OFFICIO Superintendent of Census; and that said census be taken by the assessors of the several towns, townships, and cities within the state, at the time of the annual assessment, and without extra compensation, under the supervision and direction of the said superintendent.

The people, by a large majority, voted to amend Section ii, Article 8, of the Constitution of this State. This amendment relates to the loaning of the permanent school funds. It is your duty to "provide by law the method of determining the amount of said funds which will be invested from time to time" etc. Great care should be used in protecting these funds and the statute required should be enacted without unnecessary delay.

A law should be enacted whereby the disease known as "cattle mange" may be checked and cured. A little prevention is worth a great deal of cure. It is our judgment that each township should be required to put in a dipping plant, when ordered to do so by the Board of County Commissioners, and that the same be under control of the supervisors of the town, and that each person who has cattle or sheep should be required to dip the same in the presence of a member of said board as often as is deemed advisable; that the expense of the construction and maintenance of the dipping plant should be borne by the township ; and that on the ranges, where there is no township organization, the law enacted on this subject should designate not only the time and place, but also who should superintend the same, and how the expense shall be met.

The National Government is doing everything in its power to check and eradicate this disease and, as it is the duty of each interested state to do its part, our state, together with the counties and townships, should intelligently and effectively co-operate in the matter.

At the earliest date possible, a twine plant should be established at the Penitentiary, for three reasons. First, it would give useful employment to the prisoners; second, it would reduce the cost of twine to our farmers; and third, with careful management, it will put money into the State Treasury instead of taking it out. The Board of Directors of the Kansas Penitentiary say, "the twine plant has been a success and with proper management will continue to be ; it is no longer an experiment, as it has been demonstrated that a good quality of binder twine can be successfully manufactured at this institution and furnished to the customer at a less price than they can obtain it for from outside concerns. No tax payer of the state can consistently object to the expense of establishing and operating the twine plant." If the revenues of the state would warrant it, now, or in the near future, we would urge you to make an appropriation for initiating this important undertaking.

Recently it was our pleasure to inspect our Penitentiary, and it is simple justice to say that the order and discipline certainly is of the highest order. Cleanliness, which is next to Godliness, was much in evidence.

There are many prisoners therein who might be out on parole, and we recommend that you provide for the indeterminate sentence of convicts. This provision is giving splendid satisfaction in other states.

We also urge that you provide for a chaplain. The unfortunate men who are confined in our penitentiary need the daily influence of a clean, true, Christian man. The power of a kind word spoken by a good man at the right time cannot be over-estimated. In a word, we believe that the penitentiary should be largely governed by kindness. Employes and guards can be kind and firm at the same time.

In this connection we want it understood by the people of this state, that we will not, in the language of my worthy predecessor, "usurp the functions of courts and juries; that the pardoning power will be exercised strictly according to the theory of our system of jurisprudence and the spirit of our constitution."

The Main Building at the Soldier's Home is badly out of repair, and there are many other repairs which need to be made in and about the Home. It is of the first importance that an appropriation be voted for these betterments. The old soldier who has no other home should have all the real comforts of one in our Soldiers' Home. His bed should be as good and as clean as yours or mine, and his food should be wholesome and adapted to his age and conditions of health. Let the Old Soldier's welfare be your first care.

Much progress has been made in building up our State Militia, and General S. J. Conklin and all those who have aided him are entitled to congratulations. General Conklin is asking for a \$70,000 appropriation for the militia. We think this is too much by at least \$35,000.

South Dakota is an Agricultural State and the State Board of Agriculture should be given a reasonable appropriation.

This Legislature should provide for the holding of Farmer's Institutes under the supervision and direction of the Agricultural College. Every state in the Union, save two, provides for these institutes : South Dakota and Arkansas.

Our people are prone to do too much poor farming and plant too much poor seed. If these institutes did nothing but instruct our farmers how to select seed corn, in five years' time we would double, in quantity and quality, our corn crop.

There is too much Latin taught at Brookings and too much Mechanical Engineering taught at Vermillion. There is room and work for both of these splendid institutions but neither should trespass on the rights of the other. Not very many students in this young state can take Mechanical Engineering. The general government under the Morrill Act sends the Agricultural College \$25,000

a year with which to pay for the teaching along the two lines specified in the Act of Congress establishing the Land Grant Colleges. The name given by Congress to these Colleges is "Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts."

The Department of the Interior has made a ruling indicating what subjects may be taught at the expense of the Morrill Fund, both in Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. There are nine of these subjects in agriculture and eighteen in mechanic arts. The first eight subjects in mechanic arts named by the Department of the Interior are as follows

1. Mechanical engineering; 2. Civil engineering; 3. Electrical engineering; 4. Irrigation engineering; 5. Mining engineering; 6. Marine engineering; 7. Railway engineering; 8. Experimental engineering. Thus you will see that the Agricultural college receives perpetually \$25,000 a year with which to pay for teaching in agriculture and engineering. Engineering is well known to be exceedingly expensive both for teaching and equipment. The state has to pay the Professors who teach Mechanical engineering at the State University. It seems to me that it is unwise to attempt to teach Mechanical engineering at the State University when we take into consideration, our financial condition, and the splendid facilities we have for teaching Mechanical engineering at the Agricultural college. Agriculture and engineering belong to the Agricultural college. The University has scores and multitudes of subjects, all groups of the professional school.

We would not in any way injure the State University to build up the Agricultural College, or vice versa, but we do think that all the money that can possibly be appropriated for the State University might better go to strengthen the University in things other than Mechanical engineering.

It is very gratifying to note that our Regents of Education recommend no new buildings for our numerous state educational institutions.

We think there is no pressing need for the enactment of a Primary Election law providing for direct nominations. Probably no state in the Union is freer from internal strife within the political parties than is south Dakota. In theory such a law is plausible but in results it is not yet a success in any state where tried. With our appropriations exceeding our revenues and with no safe or adequate capitol building. we do not think it advisable for the state

to go into the experiment business. If such a law is enacted, at least ninety per cent of all our offices will be filled by men who live in towns and cities, and it would be only a question of time until the rural districts would be unrepresented. The farming and grazing interests of this state are of the first importance. If the state is to have the future which we all expect for it these interests must not be slighted, they must be largely represented in our offices, both state and county, and especially so in our legislative halls. Such a law is expensive both to the tax payers and to candidates. If such a law is enacted it will cost twice as much to make nominations as to conduct the general elections. Taxes are already too high. With a primary election law the office in no sense seeks the man, but the man seeks it, in many instances buys it. The poor man, the man of small means has no show against the man of means. The man of means can and will in the primary elections see many more people than the man of limited means and if he is skilled and clever, in many ways his dollars will aid him, regardless of his fitness, in securing the nomination. Once such a law is enacted the poor man, the man that is worthy and qualified, will be eliminated and the man of dollars will win and too often he will be a weak and unqualified official. A good caucus law is all that is needed. Pass such a law, providing when and where the polls shall be open on caucus day and how long, etc. The law should provide strict rules and regulations prohibiting illegal voting, intimidation and the illegal use of money, and there will be no further demand for a costly primary election law.

It seems that the time has come when a State Capitol should be built. If the pioneers of this state, who laid the foundation stones of this young commonwealth, are to see and have a part in the construction of a capitol building, the hour to make the move is at hand.

We recommend that plans be selected for a capitol building to cost \$500,000. A reasonable appropriation should be made by this legislature with which to begin such building if it can be done legally. In this connection we call your attention to a part of Section of Article XIII of the Constitution, which is in these words "For the purpose of defraying extraordinary expenses and making public improvements, or to meet casual deficits or failure in revenue, the state may contract debts never to exceed with previous debts in the aggregate \$100,000, and no greater indebtedness shall be incurred except for the purpose of repelling invasion."

It is of vital importance that one wing of the Capitol building be constructed during the coming year. If this temporary building should be burned, it, of itself, would be little loss, but it would take with it the State's splendid Supreme Court Library and all the files and records of the State, which neither money nor time could replace.

The salary of the Attorney-General should be increased. It is one of the most important offices, if not the most important one, in the state. It is now most efficiently and patriotically filled by one of the ablest lawyers the state has produced. The question of increasing the Attorney-General's salary should again be submitted to the people.

The salary of the State Treasurer should also be increased and some arrangement should be made whereby a certain portion of the surplus money in the State Treasury should be loaned to reputable and responsible banks within this state, and the interest received therefor, on daily balances should be (by the banks) turned into the State Treasury.

The railroad regulation question is one of great importance. It is the most important question before the National Congress at this session, and no plan is better qualified to protect the rights of the people than President Roosevelt.

Railroads are public servants and should serve the people well and reasonably. They should be managed with due regard to the interests of the people. The State should treat them fairly and they, in return, should respect the wishes and rights of the people. If existing laws are not adequate to protect the rights of the people, laws that are such should be enacted.

My wish and hope is, that we may all serve the people of this splendid young state economically, to the end that every dollar of the money that the people have to pay for the support of the State and all of the public institutions may be wisely expended and fully accounted for.

It is the wish of the people that appropriations be kept down. Hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars can be cut out of nearly every appropriation. Every such bill should be carefully scrutinized and every item that can be cut out, should be.

In a word, this Legislature, composed of business men, should keep APPROPRIATIONS WITHIN THE REVENUES. You

should manage this business intrusted to you by your constituents the same as you would your farm, your bank, or your store. In plain, and simple words, you should not contract debts without providing the money with which to pay them.

The foregoing suggestions seem to me worthy of your careful consideration. Doubtless you have many other matters of importance in mind that deserve to be brought before the people.

Trusting in Him who said "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God", let us aid each other and do our duty.

Samuel H. Elrod,
Governor.

January 3, 1905.